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ABSTRACT

This report presents findings of a study, conducted by the United States General Accounting Office (GAO), that investigated programs used by schools to curb violence. Specifically, the study examined four promising school-based violence-prevention programs. Data were obtained from: (1) interviews with violence-prevention program directors, federal agency officials, and experts on school violence; (2) visits to the four school sites; and (3) a review of the four programs' evaluation data. The programs included Anaheim, California's School Management and Resource Teams (SMART) program; Dayton, Ohio's Positive Adolescents Choices Training (PACT) program; New York, New York's Resolving Conflict Creatively (RCCP) program; and Paramount, California's Alternatives to Gang Membership (ATGM) program. The programs reported changes in participants' attitudes toward violence and gang membership, less disruptive behavior, and less contact with the criminal justice system. The study also identified seven characteristics of promising school-based violence-prevention programs: a comprehensive approach, an early start and long-term commitment, strong leadership and disciplinary policies, staff development, parental involvement, interagency partnerships and community linkages, and a culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate approach. The study also identifies 26 federally sponsored evaluations of violence-prevention programs operating in schools. Appendices contain a summary and profile of school-district responses to violence, a list of federally sponsored evaluations, notes on the research scope and methodology, and lists of GAO contacts and acknowledgments. Two tables and one figure are included. (LMI)

United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to the Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Children and Families, Committee on Labor and Human Resources, U.S. Senate

April 1995

SCHOOL SAFETY

Promising Initiatives for Addressing School Violence

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United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Health, Education, and
Human Services Division

B-256397

April 25, 1995

The Honorable Christopher J. Dodd
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Children and Families
Committee on Labor and Human Resources
United States Senate

Dear Senator Dodd:

The incidence of school violence—searches for weapons, shootings, gang activity, fighting, and other instances of disruptive behavior—has risen to unacceptable levels. According to the National School Safety Center (NSSC), nearly 3 million crimes occur in or near school campuses every year—about one every 6 seconds that school is in session.[1] Further, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that at least 105 school-related violent deaths occurred during the 2-year period—July 1992 through June 1994. Such conditions create environments that impede teaching and learning and make parents reluctant to send their children to school. In fact, a recent national survey listed school order and safety as parents' top priority—right along with teaching the basics (reading, writing, and arithmetic).[2] Ending the epidemic of youth violence will not be easy. According to violence-prevention experts, no simple solution exists. However, individuals, groups, and community organizations are beginning to work with schools to develop programs aimed at stopping youth violence before it starts.

This report responds to your request for information about some of the programs used by schools to curb violence. As agreed with your staff, we (1) examined four promising prevention programs, obtaining teacher and student views on these efforts, and reviewed evaluation data on these programs; (2) identified key characteristics typically associated with promising school-based violence-prevention programs; and (3) identified federally sponsored evaluations of violence-prevention programs operating in schools.

To answer your questions, we reviewed the research literature on youth violence-prevention, and interviewed violence-prevention program directors, federal agency officials, and acknowledged experts. In addition,

[1]"School Safety Update," National School Safety Center News Service (September 1993), p.1.

[2]"First Things First: What Americans Expect From the Public Schools," Public Agenda, New York, New York (1994).

we visited four programs in four cities that have shown signs of success. During visits, we talked with students, teachers, and school administrators. In addition, we interviewed federal agency officials concerning their efforts to evaluate violence-prevention programs. (See app. VII for more details on our scope and methodology).

Results in Brief

The four school-based violence-prevention programs that we visited all show initial signs of success. For example, the Anaheim Union School District program in California, which stresses school management and order issues, reported reductions in the incidents of student fighting, graffiti, and defiance of authority. Paramount, California, schools use an antigang curriculum to reduce gang membership among students who participated in the program. The Dayton, Ohio, program provides students with social skills and anger-management training. According to program officials, student participants had fewer juvenile court charges than a comparable group of students. Similarly, a New York City program has used conflict-resolution and peer-mediation training to reduce student fighting. For example, 71 percent of teachers observed less physical violence among student participants.

Violence-prevention literature and experts consistently associate at least seven characteristics with promising school-based violence-prevention programs. These characteristics are (1) a comprehensive approach, (2) an early start and long-term commitment, (3) strong leadership and disciplinary policies, (4) staff development, (5) parental involvement, (6) interagency partnerships and community linkages, and (7) a culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate approach. For example, teaching students early about making positive choices and linking school-based programs to community groups, such as law enforcement or service agencies, are approaches associated with promising programs.

Although few violence-prevention programs have been evaluated, efforts are underway to identify successful approaches for curbing school violence. For example, for fiscal years 1993 and 1994, we identified 26 federal grants (approximately $28 million) that help to evaluate the effectiveness of various school-based violence-prevention programs. In addition, recent actions to increase collaboration among federal agencies could also enhance efforts to identify promising programs by providing opportunities for sharing expertise and resources.

Background

During the past decade, the Congress has expressed its concern for student safety and school security through numerous hearings and the introduction of several bills aimed at reducing youth violence. In 1994, a desire to help make schools safe prompted the Congress to pass two bills explicitly targeting school violence:

- The Safe Schools Act of 1994 authorizes the Secretary of Education to make grants to local school districts with high rates of youth violence. Schools may use these grants to support educational activities to reduce violence and promote safety. For fiscal year 1994, approximately $20 million was appropriated for this program.
- The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994 authorizes the Secretary of Education to make grants to states to prevent violence in and around schools as well as to deter the use of illegal drugs and alcohol. Allowable activities include violence-prevention and education programs for students, training and technical assistance, and developing comprehensive violence and drug prevention programs that involve parents and coordination with community groups and agencies.[3] Fiscal year 1995 appropriations for this program were approximately $482 million.[4]

In addition, in 1994 the Congress passed the Family and Community Endeavor Schools Act and the Community Schools Youth Services and Supervision Grant Program. This act authorizes the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services to provide grants to improve the overall development of at-risk children in communities with significant poverty and violent crime. Allowable activities include developing after-school programs that provide homework assistance and educational, social, and athletic activities. The fiscal year 1995 appropriation for the Family and Community Endeavor Schools Program Act was $11 million, while the Community Schools Youth Services and Supervision Grant Program Act of 1994 was $26 million.

School-Based Violence-Prevention Programs

Schools use a wide variety of educational and noneducational approaches and programs to address violence. Many school-based violence-prevention programs operate under the premise that violence is a learned behavior. In

[3]Formerly the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1984, its 1994 authorization was expanded to include violence-prevention as a key program element.

[4]The Department of Education is scheduled to disburse these funds in June 1995. However, in March 1995, some of these funds were proposed for rescission by the congressional Appropriations Committees.

general, these programs focus on primary prevention; that is, they seek to prevent violence before it occurs. Although school-based violence-prevention programs and strategies vary, most fall within the three broad categories listed below.

- Educational and curricula-based: These programs seek to teach students the skills to manage their behavior and resolve conflict nonviolently. Programs in this category focus on conflict resolution, gang aversion, social skills training, mentoring, and law-related education.
- Environmental modification: These programs focus on either the social or physical environment. Programs aimed at improving students' social environment include home visitation and after-school recreational and academic activities. Programs that seek to modify students' physical environment include installing metal detectors and gates limiting access to building entrances and exits.
- School organization and management: These programs focus on establishing school discipline policies and procedures that pertain to student behavior, creating alternative schools, and developing cooperative relationships with police and other government agencies. Legal efforts to prohibit weapons in schools also fall into this category.

A survey of its members by the National School Boards Association (NSBA) showed the wide variety of violence-prevention programs operating in schools.[5] According to the 1993 report, Violence in the Schools: How America's School Boards Are Safeguarding Our Children, the responding school districts implemented more than 750 different violence-prevention programs. For reporting districts, overall responses ranged from establishing alternative schools or programs for disruptive students (66 percent) to implementing conflict-resolution and peer-mediation training (61 percent) to developing safe havens for students (10 percent). (See app. I for a complete listing of school district responses.)

In a 1993 report, The Prevention of Youth Violence: A Framework for Community Action, the CDC highlighted several community programs designed to prevent youth violence, including those with activities closely linked to schools. For example, according to program descriptions:

- In the Atlanta area, the Go to High School, Go to College project has paired 100 successful older men with adolescent African-American males at four Atlanta area high schools and one middle school. Each mentor

[5]The NSBA surveyed more than 2,000 member school districts, of which 729 school districts responded. The results are not generalizable.

meets weekly with a student who is struggling academically, has discipline problems, or is at risk of dropping out of school. The mentors are provided with a 40-page curriculum of instructions and ideas. Mentors strive to increase the students' self-esteem and improve their grades. A local fraternity chapter provides scholarships to students in the program who qualify and want to attend college.

- In New Haven, Connecticut, the public school system in collaboration with the Yale University Psychology Department provides training in social skills in the district's middle schools. The curriculum emphasizes self-control, stress- management, problem-solving, decision-making, and communication skills. Once students have learned a general problem-solving framework, they apply their critical-thinking skills to specific issues, such as substance use.
- In Oakland, California, Teens on Target, a peer education and mentoring group, was formed after two junior high students were shot in school by other students. Teens on Target grew out of a task force, made up of a coalition of elected officials, parents, and school and community agency representatives, who felt that students would do a better job of dealing with the youth violence problem than adults. Selected high school students are trained in an intensive summer program to be violence-prevention advocates, particularly in the areas of guns, drugs, and family violence. These students become peer educators to other high school students and mentors to younger students in the middle and elementary schools.

Another innovative program—the Beacons Initiative—operates in New York City, where about 37 schools stay open 7 days a week from early morning until late evening—providing "one stop shopping" services such as counseling, tutoring, recreational activities, vocational training, and a safe place for kids to "hang out."

Four Promising Programs

Programs Seek to Stop Violence Before It Starts

Creating an orderly and disciplined school environment, free of violence, is essential for learning to take place. Consequently, many schools and communities across the nation are working together to develop solutions to prevent violence. Although school violence is a challenging issue, some school-based prevention programs appear to be promising approaches for

curbing violence. Table 1 summarizes the key features of the four programs that we visited.

Table 1: Overview of Four Programs Visited

Name	Start date	Type of program	Program scope	Funding	Partnerships
Anaheim, California: School Management and Resource Teams (SMART)	1983	Incident reporting system	26,000 students districtwide	School district and National Institute of Justice (NIJ)	Local police, parents, and business
Dayton, Ohio: Positive Adolescents Choices Training (PACT)	1989	Social skills and anger management	190 students per year in one middle school	Federal, state, and private sources	Wright State University and parents
New York, New York: Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP)	1985	Conflict resolution and peer mediation	70,000 students districtwide	School district, private sources, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Parents and a community-based organization (Educators for Social Responsibility)
Paramount, California: Alternatives to Gang Membership (ATGM)	1982	Antigang curriculum	Districtwide curriculum for 2nd, 5th, and 7th graders	City funds	Parents and city

Each program has received national recognition for its innovative approach in addressing school violence and illustrates the types of partnerships schools and communities have formed to curb violence. Each is summarized below.

- Anaheim, California's SMART program has been applauded by federal officials as a key effort in addressing school management and order issues. According to program officials, SMART has been disseminated across the country as a model school management program that allows administrators to determine at the push of a button the number and location of policy violations, offenses, and crimes committed in each school.

  The SMART program operates districtwide, using a computerized data collection system to identify and address school and law violations. SMART teams analyze data from the system to develop solutions to discipline problems. A key SMART program element is its focus on school problems, not problem schools. (See app. II for more details on this program.)

- Dayton, Ohio's PACT program has received wide recognition as a model program and valuable resource for addressing violence among African-American youth by several national organizations and leaders in

the field of violence-prevention. Program officials describe PACT as a culturally sensitive training program developed specifically for middle-school-age African-American youth to reduce their disproportionate risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence. The program especially addresses the problem of violence that involves loss of control between family, friends, or acquaintances and represents the greatest threat to adolescents.

PACT builds on research that suggests that prevention programs are most successful for economically disadvantaged and minority youth when developed with sensitivity to racial, ethnic, and cultural issues. The program's training materials are based on the rationale that adolescents who lack skills in such areas as communication, negotiation, and problem-solving have a limited range of alternatives with which to solve interpersonal problems. Consequently, PACT provides structured training in specific behavioral aspects of social skills that enhance the capacity of students to form and maintain violence-free relationships. (See app. III for more details on this program.)

- New York City's RCCP program is widely regarded as one of the most promising violence-prevention programs among public health experts. RCCP is a school-based program in conflict resolution and intergroup relations that provides a model for preventing violence and creating caring schools that are conducive for learning. According to the program officials, RCCP teaches students that they have many choices besides passivity or aggression for dealing with conflict, gives them the skills to make those choices real in their own lives, increases their understanding and appreciation of their own and others' cultures, and shows them that they play a powerful role in creating a peaceful world.

  The program's primary strategy for reaching young people is professional development of the adults in their lives—principals, teachers, and parents. RCCP works intensively with teachers, introducing them to the concepts and skills of conflict resolution and diversity. Through ongoing staff development, teachers are supported as they teach these concepts and skills in an ongoing way to their students. (See app. IV for more details on this program.)

- Paramount, California's ATGM program has been widely replicated in Southern California and officials have responded to almost 1,000 requests for information about the program. Cited as a commendable gang membership prevention program in several journals, the program has been

visited by individuals from Ireland, New Zealand, and South Africa, according to program officials. The ATGM program seeks to reduce the number of gang members and their destructive actions within the community by teaching students the harmful consequences of a gang lifestyle.

ATGM's approach is based on the belief that interest in gangs begins at a young age and that a successful antigang program must reach students early. Consequently, the program targets students in the 2nd, 5th, and 7th grades. The program uses three approaches to achieve its objectives: (1) an elementary school antigang curriculum, (2) an intermediate school follow-up program, and (3) neighborhood meetings with parents and residents. (See app. V for more details on this program.)

Students and Teachers Believe Programs Make a Difference

Nearly all discussion group participants at the four programs' schools that we visited said their violence-prevention programs were useful, helped de-escalate conflict, and taught important coping skills that students need to make positive choices. Most discussion group participants agreed that students often lack the skills needed to make productive and positive decisions. For example, several students who participated in conflict-resolution and anger-management programs said that before their training, they had not considered resolving disagreements and conflicts without fighting. One student told us:

"I didn't know any other way to solve my problems besides fighting. Now instead of fighting, I work it out and talk about it. I've got some options."

In addition, discussion group participants generally agreed that programs empowered students and helped them avoid violence by teaching them to (1) identify and solve problems through role-playing, group discussions, mediation, and other learning strategies, such as videos; and (2) make positive decisions, recognize that they have choices, and understand the consequences of their actions (for example that fighting, joining gangs, or engaging in other nonproductive behavior may result in suspension from school, personal injury, or death).

Students and teachers we talked with expressed concern that disruptive behavior and violence prevent meaningful learning. They told us that disruptive students interrupt the learning process by distracting other students and the teacher. According to one teacher:

"Sometimes, teachers can't teach because they've got to stop and deal with hostile situations. . . we're teaching students skills they should learn at home."

In addition, participants expressed concern that moneys intended for instructional materials, staff development, and other educational needs were spent on security efforts.

Although students and teachers perceived their programs as successful, they unequivocally stated that no one program or approach could curb school violence. They generally agreed that curbing school violence requires a combinations of approaches.[6] In addition to the key characteristics discussed later, students and teachers suggested strengthening efforts to curb violence by

- increasing the availability of violence-prevention programs,
- providing after-school activities (especially sports),
- reducing class sizes,
- addressing physical child abuse and neglect,
- providing services for at-risk families,
- establishing a uniform dress code,
- penalizing students who watch fights,
- reducing easy access to guns, and
- improving economic conditions.

Preliminary Evaluations Show Signs of Success

The authors of the preliminary evaluations that we reviewed concluded that the four programs showed initial signs of success because student participants' attitudes and behaviors had changed. Reported participant changes included: (1) new attitudes toward violence and gang membership; (2) less disruptive behavior, including fewer fights; and (3) less contact with the criminal justice system. Based on pre- and post-tests of knowledge and attitudes, behavioral observations, self-reporting, and in some cases tracking student behavior, the evaluations reported the following signs of success:

- Anaheim, California's SMART—The number of police activity reports filed dropped from 189 during the spring semester of 1993 to 93 during the fall semester of 1993, according to SMART's incident profiling system. In addition, student offenses dropped or stayed the same in all but nine categories—despite increases in crime within the community.

[6]These comments are consistent with violence and drug education research literature that suggest that comprehensive approaches that involve parents and the community as well as classroom instruction and counseling programs are more likely to achieve desired changes.

- Dayton, Ohio's PACT—For the 1992 school year, first semester PACT participants had a 50-percent reduction in incidents of physical aggression, while nonparticipants (the control group) had a 25-percent increase. Similarly second semester PACT participants had a 53-percent reduction, while nonparticipants had a 56-percent increase.
- New York City's RCCP—A 1988-89 school year evaluation of RCCP teachers revealed that (1) 66 percent observed less student name-calling and fewer verbal put-downs, (2) 89 percent agreed that the mediation program had helped students take more responsibility for solving their own problems, and (3) 71 percent reported that students demonstrated less physical violence.
- Paramount, California's ATGM—After participating in the program, 90 percent of the students responded negatively to the idea of joining a gang. Based on a follow-up survey, most students maintained that response a year later. Further, a 1993 cross-check of the names of more than 3,500 past participants with the names of approximately 1,600 known gang members found only a 4-percent match.

Collectively, the evaluations showed high levels of enthusiasm and support for the programs. Although these results are promising, the limited nature of the evaluations prevent concluding that improvements in student behavior resulted from program participation. Determining whether these programs reduce violence among students over the long term requires more carefully designed evaluations that focus on the programs' actual impact on behavior. Such evaluation design matters are discussed further below.

Preliminary Evaluations Need Stronger Designs

A general consensus exists that while preliminary evaluations of violence-prevention programs are a useful starting point, most lack the methodological rigor needed to determine their effectiveness. To improve the usefulness of future evaluations, greater emphasis should be placed on designing stronger impact or effectiveness studies.[7] Design issues requiring particular attention include: sampling techniques, longitudinal assessment, random assignment, and collection of data on impact (fewer fights) and outcome measures (reduced injury).

To determine whether violence-prevention programs really cause observed behavioral change, evaluators should compare the outcomes

[7]Impact evaluations focus on program effectiveness. Impact evaluations are methodologically rigorous studies that use scientific research methods to estimate to what extent participant outcomes (for example, reductions in the prevalence of violence) occur because of program participation.

achieved by students in randomly assigned treatment and control groups.[8] For example, concerning the Paramount, California, ATGM program cross-checking mentioned earlier, how many (or how few) students would have joined gangs in the absence of the program is not clear. Because the evaluation design did not use random assignment, linking changes in student behavior to program participation is difficult. Finally, longitudinal follow-up on students for 4 to 5 years after participation (or until they leave school) would show to what extent initially observed effects persist over time.

The program officials that we talked with acknowledged the need for stronger evaluation designs that focus on program effectiveness. However, they said that the high cost of program evaluation, coupled with a lack of skilled research and evaluation staff, generally precluded developing stronger designs. They said that implementing programs (which many perceive as doing something about the problem of violence) has more prestige than evaluating programs. Consequently, although funders want data on participant outcomes, they focus on program implementation rather than evaluation.

According to program officials, doing impact evaluations with stronger designs depends on obtaining grants or private funds specifically for that purpose. For example, PACT program officials have been able to develop comparison groups and conduct longitudinal followup on participants at one middle school based on funding received from private sources for its evaluation efforts. However, at the time that we completed our work, only one of the programs we visited had received substantial funding for evaluation. In September 1993, the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at CDC awarded the New York RCCP program a 3-year, $729,000 grant to conduct a detailed impact evaluation. The three-pronged evaluation will include (1) a longitudinal process and impact study, (2) an in-depth observational and qualitative study, and (3) development of a management information system.

Promising Programs Incorporate Seven Key Characteristics

Conclusive evidence concerning the effectiveness of specific programs is not yet available. Nevertheless, some indications of promising program characteristics exist, especially in school settings. Based on our literature review and visits to violence-prevention programs, we identified seven

[8]True experimental design requires random assignment to treatment and comparison groups. Although this is an analytically strong methodology, it can be costly and require administrative control over the program. In some circumstances, quasi-experimental designs may be adequate when a true experimental design is not feasible.

characteristics associated with promising school-based violence-prevention programs (see fig. 1).

Figure 1: Promising Programs Incorporate Seven Key Characteristics

- Comprehensive approach: Recognizes violence as a complex problem that requires a multifaceted response. Consequently, these programs address more than one problem area and involve a variety of services that link schools to the community.
- Early start and long-term commitment: Focuses on (1) reaching young children to shape attitudes, knowledge, and behavior while they are still open to positive influences, and (2) sustaining the intervention over multiple years (for example, from kindergarten through 12th grade).
- Strong leadership and disciplinary policies: Show strong leadership at the school level. Principals and school administrators need to sustain stable funding, staff, and program components and, most important, they must collaborate with others to reach program goals. In addition, student disciplinary policies and procedures are clear and consistently applied.
- Staff development: Provides training for key school administrators, teachers, and staff that equips them to handle disruptive students and mediate conflict as well as understand and incorporate prevention strategies into their school activities.
- Parental involvement: Seeks to increase parental involvement in school efforts to reduce violence by providing training on violence-prevention skills, making home visits, and using parents as volunteers.

- Interagency partnerships and community linkages: Seeks community support in making school antiviolence policies and programs work by developing collaborative agreements in which school personnel, local businesses, law enforcement officers, social service agencies, and private groups work together to address the multiple causes of violence.
- Culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate: Considers (1) racial ethnic students' cultural values and norms by using bilingual materials and culturally appropriate program activities, role models, and leaders; and (2) participants' age and level of development in designing program materials and activities.

Although researchers advocate the use of these key characteristics, few violence-prevention programs incorporate all seven characteristics.

Federal Evaluation Efforts

Our analysis of program descriptions contained in Juvenile Delinquency Development Statements: A Report on Federal Programs for the 3-year period 1990 through 1992, showed that 11 agencies funded 115 research programs or evaluations (ranging from $108 to $133 million annually) that addressed youth violence. However, only one grant provided funding to evaluate a school-based violence-prevention program.

More recently, some federal officials have acknowledged the need to focus available resources on identifying violence-prevention programs and strategies that work. For example, three research-based agencies—CDC, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH)—have taken the lead in funding impact evaluations to study the effectiveness of specific school-based interventions. These three agencies awarded about 26 grants totaling approximately $28 million for this purpose during fiscal years 1993 and 1994 (see app. VI for a list of these studies).

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994 presents an opportunity for the federal government to strengthen efforts to determine the effectiveness of various violence-prevention programs and approaches. The act authorizes up to $1 million for a national impact evaluation. The act also authorizes up to $25 million in discretionary funding for national programs—evaluation is one of many allowable activities.

Greater Collaboration Needed Among Federal Agencies

Increased collaboration among federal agencies could significantly leverage federal funds and enhance efforts to identify and disseminate information on promising violence-prevention programs. At least three federal departments—Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice—support school-based violence-prevention research and programming. However, these individual departments have not mounted a comprehensive strategy for addressing school violence. Further, although these departments occasionally work together, a formal mechanism to facilitate collaboration and coordination on school violence issues has not yet been developed. Agency officials cite budget constraints as a major factor necessitating greater collaboration.

According to federal officials, effective collaboration requires (1) sharing resources (both staff and funding) and information (such as research and programmatic plans and priorities) and (2) developing clear roles and responsibilities for each federal department to ensure a comprehensive approach that avoids overlapping and duplicative efforts. Consequently, the mechanism for coordination and collaboration should facilitate planning and program integration, not merely information sharing. The Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is responsible for coordinating the efforts of federal agencies concerning juvenile delinquency and delinquency prevention. However, it only recently began meeting—after a 2-year hiatus due to changes in its structure and appointment of citizen practitioner members.[9]

Efforts are now underway to revitalize the Coordinating Council, which met in October 1994 and January 1995. One of the tasks of the Coordinating Council is to develop a national action plan to prevent juvenile delinquency and youth violence.

Some federal collaborative efforts concerning violence-prevention programming have started. For instance, the National School Safety Center (NSSC) and the SMART program represent successful interagency collaborations.[10] In each instance, the Departments of Justice and Education shared funding and staff to implement these programs. In addition, for the past 2 years, these agencies and several others have

[9]The Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention was established through Section 206 of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act of 1974. The Chairman of the Coordinating Council is the Attorney General of the United States; the Vice Chairman is the Administrator for the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

[10]NSSC represents a partnership between the Departments of Justice and Education and Pepperdine University. The NSSC, which serves as a clearinghouse, focuses national attention on school safety issues and solutions.

collaborated in sponsoring a national violence-prevention conference. Expected benefits from increased collaboration among federal agencies include development of

- a comprehensive long-term federal violence-prevention research agenda,
- stronger evaluation designs that result in firmer conclusions about program effectiveness,
- a database with information summarizing the cumulative results of program evaluations across agencies,
- a process for formulating and identifying successful programs,
- a guide for the selection and implementation of conflict-resolution programs in schools, and
- a central on-line database for disseminating information on successful programs.

Conclusions

Many schools throughout our nation are struggling with rising levels of youth violence in and around schools. Schools have adopted a broad range of solutions to curb violence. The four programs we visited—in California, Ohio, and New York—represent examples of some of the promising approaches schools have implemented to address violence.

Research suggests that the most promising school-based violence-prevention programs will involve at least some of the seven key characteristics. Among these characteristics are a comprehensive approach, starting early, and involving parents. Although few prevention programs have been evaluated, some federal agencies are now funding evaluations to examine various violence-prevention program approaches. The results, which should be available in about 3 to 5 years, will help determine which programs work best at curbing violence.

Agency Comments

We discussed a draft of this report with responsible agency officials at the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services' CDC, and the Department of Justice's NIJ and OJJDP, and we have included their comments where appropriate. In general, these officials agreed with the report.

As arranged with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents beforehand, we plan no further distribution of this report until 3 days after the date of this letter. At that time, we will send copies to the appropriate

congressional committees, the Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Services, and the Attorney General. In addition, we will make copies available to others upon request. Please contact me or Cornelia Blanchette, Associate Director, on (202) 512-7014 if you have any questions. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix VIII.

Sincerely yours,

Linda G. Morra

Linda G. Morra
Director, Education and
Employment Issues

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Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ATGM	Alternatives to Gang Membership
AUHSD	Anaheim Unified High School District
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
ESR	Educators for Social Responsibility
IPS	Incident Profiling System
JJDP	Juvenile Justice Deliquency Prevention
NIJ	National Institute of Justice
NIH	National Institutes of Health
NIMH	National Institute for Mental Health
NSBA	National School Boards Association
NSSC	National School Safety Center
OJJDP	Office of Juvenile Justice Deliquency Prevention
PACT	Positive Adolescents Choices Training
RCCP	Resolving Conflict Creatively Program
SMART	School Management and Resources Training

Summary of School Districts' Responses to Violence

The following table summarizes the responses received by the National School Boards Association from a survey of its members. NSBA surveyed more than 2,000 school districts, of which 729 school districts responded. The results are not generalizable. The responses are contained in NSBA's 1993 report, Violence in the Schools: How America's School Boards Are Safeguarding Our Children.

Table I.1: School Districts' Responses to Violence

	Percent responding that they used strategy			
Strategy	**Overall**	**Urban**	**Suburban**	**Rural**
Suspension	78	85	78	75
Student conduct/discipline code	76	87	79	70
Collaboration with other agencies	73	93	73	62
Expulsion	72	85	68	70
School board policy	71	76	69	71
Alternative programs or schools	66	85	66	57
Staff development	62	74	66	52
Conflict resolution/mediation training/peer mediation	61	82	63	49
Locker searches	50	64	43	49
Closed campus for lunch	44	46	48	37
Mentoring programs	43	65	44	31
Home-school linkages	42	55	45	32
Dress code	41	52	42	33
Law-related education programs	39	57	36	33
Multicultural sensitivity training	39	62	49	18
Parent skill training	38	51	39	28
Search and seizure	36	51	35	28
Security personnel in schools	36	65	40	18
Support groups	36	47	37	28
Student photo identification system	32	41	39	20
Gun-free school zones	31	46	26	26
Specialized curriculum	27	48	25	18
Drug-detecting dogs	24	27	18	27
Work opportunities	23	34	21	19
Telephones in classrooms	22	31	21	16
Metal detectors	15	39	10	6
Volunteer parent patrols	13	17	14	8
Closed-circuit television	11	19	8	8
Establishing safe havens for students	10	16	9	6

Source: NSBA.

Anaheim, California: School Management and Resource Teams Program, Anaheim Union High School District

District Profile

The Anaheim Union High School District's (AUHSD) enrollment in grades 7 through 12 increased about 5 percent over the past 3 years to the 1993-94 level of about 26,000. AUHSD students come from seven different cities—La Palma, Cypress, Stanton, Buena Park, Anaheim, Garden Grove, and Fullerton. AUHSD has eight high schools, eight junior high schools, and a variety of alternative education sites. Students with limited or no English skills account for 35 percent of the student population. In the 1993-94 school year, over 34 percent of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

Like many school districts nationwide, AUHSD began experiencing problems with drug abuse, crime, and gangs in the late 1970s. The number of identified gangs and gang members increased significantly from 1985 to 1994. In 1985, AUHSD communities had eight gangs with an estimated 179 members. Today, local police departments have identified over 50 gangs with about 2,100 members. AUHSD has initiated several strategies to combat crime in and around their schools. AUHSD has a zero-tolerance policy for gangs, weapons, and drugs on campuses. Also, AUHSD has an antigang dress code and closed-campus policy. AUHSD schools have nonuniformed community volunteers to help with security, but do not use metal detectors. The Anaheim Police Department has assigned two officers to work full-time on gang prevention activities in the district. AUHSD officials are also experimenting with other methods of school security. For example, they have placed mobile homes on several school campuses. Retired persons live in the homes rent-free in exchange for helping to deter after-hours school vandalism.

Program Overview

In the late 1970s, AUHSD officials sought ways to combat the rising levels of crime in their communities. They participated in training to identify, categorize, and log incidents on campus and design appropriate interventions. These training efforts turned into the SMART program. In 1983, the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, and the U.S. Department of Education jointly funded SMART as a pilot in AUHSD and two other sites. SMART's goal is to improve school safety and discipline by combining information technology with concepts in school team-building and interagency coordination.

Since 1983, AUHSD administrators and staff have developed and integrated the SMART program districtwide. SMART consists of five program components that operate together and provide a unified approach to school safety and discipline:

- Commitment. The primary SMART requirement is the commitment of the superintendent and principals to improve school safety and discipline.
- Safety and security audit. Program officials conduct an audit of district policies and practices affecting drugs, crime, discipline, and student/faculty safety to help clarify responsibilities for school officials in dealing with different types of crime and discipline problems.
- Incident Profiling System. The Incident Profiling System (IPS) is a computerized procedure by which each school records disciplinary infractions and criminal acts. IPS generates reports describing patterns of disruptions and crimes. It tracks the types of incidents, locations, times, and persons involved.
- SMART teams. SMART teams include students, parents, teachers, support staff, law enforcement/security, and administrators. SMART teams meet monthly to analyze current IPS data, set priorities, devise actions to reduce problems, and monitor results. Each team prepares a SMART plan to reduce priority problems.
- Interagency coordination. AUHSD officials meet with representatives from juvenile justice, social service, and law enforcement agencies to coordinate their responses to youth who commit crimes or have behavior problems.

The core of the SMART program is the statistical information gathered through IPS. This computerized system enables AUHSD officials to collect and analyze a wide range of information about student discipline. Over the years, AUHSD officials have developed their own computer program to record and track disruptive events and individuals. School officials are responsible for completing a machine-scannable form on any disruptive event or individual they encounter. IPS data include rule violations such as a failure to serve detention and law violations such as robbery, sex offenses, drug or weapons possession, assaults, and property crimes.

AUHSD principals and SMART teams compile and analyze IPS data at the school level to dispel rumors, to identify and characterize discipline problems, and to assess the consequences of actions taken. Principals can identify the areas of the school and the period of the day when the most violence or disruption occurs and the individual students who are causing a disproportionate amount of disruption. Once the principal has this information, he or she convenes a SMART team. This team produces and monitors a school SMART plan concentrating on one topic at a time. For example, a team may concentrate on locker thefts. A district SMART team follows a similar process when analyzing districtwide information.

AUHSD principals, counselors, and staff have developed an integrated service model to handle students or systemic problems identified by SMART data. This model provides a mechanism for schools to work with the community, governmental agencies, and local businesses to meet the needs of these at-risk students. Services provided through this integrated approach include peer tutoring, alcohol- and drug-prevention programs, crisis intervention, and conflict-resolution training.

Program Accomplishments and Evaluation Efforts

AUHSD officials have conducted extensive internal evaluations of the SMART program that compare trends in IPS data. In general, district statistics show that incidents on campuses have increased gradually while levels of crime in the surrounding communities have increased at a much faster rate. AUHSD officials cited recent outcome information generated from IPS: (1) 55 percent of the 37 main categories of incidents have declined since 1993,[11] (2) police activity on campus is down 51 percent from the spring semester 1993 to 1994, and (3) the reported total costs of incidents have dropped 66 percent from the fall semester 1991 to 1993.

In 1992, NIJ and the Department of Education contracted with the Center for Research and Evaluation in Social Policy[12] for an external evaluation of the SMART program. The report focused on SMART's usefulness—based on interviews, SMART data, and internal documents. The evaluators found strong support and encouragement for the SMART program among school board members, the superintendent, and district and school staff. Further, they found that AUHSD officials developed a depth of understanding and experience well beyond the core elements of SMART. They also found evidence that schools using the SMART program had reduced problems with graffiti, fighting, failure to attend detention, and defiance of authority. The report concluded that AUHSD officials have institutionalized SMART into its daily operations and are taking positive actions as a result of the SMART program. The report also concluded that SMART and related systems have increased the level of confidence of parents, students, and teachers in school safety.

[11]Incident categories that have declined include assaults, battery, robbery, possession of destructive devices, property crimes, forgery, tardiness, weapons, failure to serve detention, throwing objects, threats/intimidation, profanity, tobacco, and off-campus incidents.

[12]Robert Boruch, "SMART Systems in Twenty Anaheim Schools", draft report No. P-557, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania, 1992.

Major Success Factors

AUHSD officials believe that the following key factors contribute to the SMART program's success:

- using a systematic problem-solving approach to resolve school crime and discipline problems;
- focusing on local control;
- using existing resources with minimal additional funding;
- developing positive working relationships among educators, parents, students, local leaders, and community agencies; and
- focusing on school problems, not problem schools.

Implementation Barriers

The main barrier that AUHSD officials encountered was in designing the computer data files, reports, and forms to support SMART. AUHSD officials have spent considerable time and effort in developing their own computer system to fit their needs. AUHSD officials stated that they have experimented with three generations of computer programs since SMART's inception. School officials currently use a machine-scannable form to record incidents. They also developed a SMART data dictionary that lists various identifying characteristics of individuals and events and types of violations committed. IPS generates numerous computer reports to identify problems and make comparisons. This system has also been programmed to provide school safety information required by California.

AUHSD representatives have briefed other districts interested in their SMART computer program. They said that their system could be easily replicated in other school districts. However, dissemination efforts are contingent on future funding.

Funding Sources

Since 1983, AUHSD has had various levels of funding from NIJ and the Department of Education. Over the years, AUHSD used these federal funds for a variety of activities, such as program dissemination and site coordinator stipends, training, and conferences. AUHSD has funded most of SMART's operating expenses out of its general funds since SMART's inception. Major ongoing expenses for 18 sites during 1993-94 totaled about $37,000. This estimate includes site coordinator stipends ($16,000), materials/supplies ($4,000), and a part-time program specialist ($17,000). In addition, NIJ and the Department of Education awarded AUHSD a grant of $40,000 in 1993-94 to enhance program interventions with conflict-resolution training, training packets, and training for new administrators.

Dayton, Ohio: Positive Adolescents Choices Training Program, Roth Middle School

District Profile

The Dayton public school system serves approximately 27,000 students. The district offers 5 high schools, 7 middle schools, 35 elementary schools, and several centers with specialized programs of study. About 65 percent of the district's students are African-American. Most of the student population is educationally and economically disadvantaged; all schools within the district qualify for Title I funding.[13] In addition, about 70 percent of the students participate in the free or reduced-price lunch program.

Violence is a growing concern within the district. During the 1990 school year, 152 students were referred to the principal for disciplinary action because they carried weapons in school. To help maintain safe school environments, walk-through metal detectors were installed in all middle and high schools in November 1992. During the first 2 years of metal detector use, districtwide expulsions and suspension rates for weapons-related incidents declined. For example, expulsions dropped from 200 in school year 1991-92 to 120 in school year 1992-93. Similarly, suspensions dropped from 3,483 in school year 1991-92 to 3,311 in school year 1992-93.

Program Overview

PACT is a violence-prevention program directed specifically at middle school African-American youth. Staff from the School of Professional Psychology at Wright State University implement the PACT program in cooperation with Dayton Public Schools. The program began operation in 1989. Since the beginning of the program, more than 130 youths have been trained.

PACT uses the rationale that adolescents who lack skills in such areas as communication, negotiation, and problem-solving have a limited range of alternatives with which to solve interpersonal problems. In addition, the program builds on research that suggests that violence-prevention interventions with economically disadvantaged and minority youth are most successful when developed with sensitivity to racial, ethnic, and cultural issues. Therefore, the program uses African-American role models to create a learning environment directly relevant to the lives of African-American adolescents. Teachers refer participants based on perceived skill deficiencies in peer relations, behavior problems (particularly aggression), or history of victimization by violence. PACT training uses small groups, composed of 10 to 12 students (12 to 15 years old). Training is provided twice a week at Roth Middle School during

[13]The Title I program (formerly Chapter I), authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, serves educationally deprived children—children whose educational attainment is below the level that is appropriate for their age—in relatively high-poverty areas.

regular school hours. Groups generally receive about 38 training sessions, each lasting about 50 minutes (the duration of a classroom period). Two doctoral-level clinical psychology students facilitate each training session.

The principal PACT program components include

- training in three social skills (giving negative feedback, receiving negative feedback, and negotiation),
- training in anger management skills (techniques to control or express anger constructively), and
- education or information about violence (awareness-building lessons on the nature and extent of violence).

Three videotaped vignettes feature African-American role models demonstrating how some of the target skills are used: The "Givin' It" video introduces skills on how to express angry feelings in a calm, nonthreatening manner. The "Takin' It" video introduces skills on how to receive negative feedback without acting irrationally or becoming overly upset. The "Workin' It Out" video introduces skills on how to solve problems or work out a compromise to a conflict without resorting to aggressive or violent behavior.

Principal techniques used during training sessions include modeling, coaching, role-playing, feedback, and homework (practicing the skills outside of class). In addition, program facilitators use an incentive system that rewards active participation and appropriate behavior (such as being on time and following directions) during training sessions. For example, students receive success dollars—paper money that can be exchanged for various gift items, such as cassette tapes, candy or food, T-shirts, jewelry, or games.

Program Accomplishments and Evaluation Efforts

PACT evaluations seek to measure both process and behavioral effects of the program. In addition, since 1989, staff have conducted longitudinal followup through juvenile court on all PACT-trained students. An evaluation of the 1989-90 project year showed that youth who participated in the program demonstrated improvement in all target skill areas (for example, giving and accepting negative feedback, problem-solving, and resisting peer pressure). A 1992-93 outcome study demonstrated that the PACT participants had less involvement in fighting and fewer referrals to juvenile court in comparison with a control group that did not receive training. For example, PACT-trained students

- demonstrated a 50-percent reduction in physical aggression at school;
- showed behavior improvement during the course of training, which was maintained beyond participation in the program;
- showed a greater reduction in levels of physical aggression than similar nontrained students who did not receive the training; and
- had more than 50 percent fewer overall and violence-related juvenile court charges and a lower per-person rate of offending than students in a nontrained control group.

Other signs of success include (1) principal and teacher observations concerning improvements in the behavior of individual students attributed to PACT and (2) student testimonials that PACT training made a difference in how they acted.

Major Success Factors

PACT officials believe that the following key factors contribute to the program's success:

- designing the program as a leadership club and providing a student reward system,
- using culturally sensitive videotapes that feature African-American role models, and
- using doctoral-level clinical psychology students as trainers.

Implementation Barriers

The PACT program overcame two major implementation barriers. First, PACT initially targeted a small group of chronically truant adolescents at an alternative school-based dropout prevention program. Although these participants showed skill and behavior improvements, the setting proved to be problematic. For example, the participants were often absent from school. Consequently, absence from PACT training was a major problem. To address this issue, in 1990 the program relocated to the Roth Middle School where it targeted a younger population. Second, the program initially operated as a pull-out model, with meeting times scheduled for the same time as academic subjects. Consequently, students missed some regularly scheduled classes. Since the program targeted high-risk students who most likely were also experiencing academic problems, this was of particular concern. To overcome this barrier, PACT violence-prevention training was made part of the regular curriculum under the health education track.

Funding Sources

State, federal, and private sources provide funding for the PACT program. Funding to develop, test, evaluate, and disseminate program information has come from a variety of sources, including the Ohio Commission on Minority Health; the Ohio Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Services; the Mathile Foundation; and the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Department of Justice. In addition, support for the production of the PACT curriculum resource guide came from the Department of Health and Human Services' Bureau of Maternal and Child Health.

At the school level, instituting the PACT program using doctoral-level students as trainers costs approximately $55,200 per year or about $287 per student. If parent training is provided, the cost increases by $23,400 to approximately $78,600 or about $409 per student. These estimates assume that the program serves 192 students. Costs for program evaluation vary depending on the complexity of the research design. Current PACT evaluations cost about $21,000 for a part-time evaluation consultant.

New York, New York: Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, New York City Public Schools

District Profile

New York City's public school system is the largest in the country, with 1,052 schools and nearly 1 million students.[14] The ethnically diverse student population citywide consisted of 37 percent African-American, 36 percent Hispanic, 18 percent white, and 9 percent Asian/Pacific Islander for the 1992-93 school year. Fourteen percent of the students had limited English proficiency and 69 percent were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

Officials are grappling with the increasing levels of urban crime and violence that are invading their schools. For the 1991-92 school year, the New York Board of Education reported 4,955 serious incidents in its schools, including homicide, robbery, sex offenses, and controlled substance and weapons possession. To increase the level of school security, the board has responded by installing metal detectors and X-ray machines and using student photo identification cards in high schools. The board has also funded conflict-resolution and mediation programs and increased the number of school safety officers in all schools. The board employs about 3,000 security officers. If considered a police department, it would rank as the ninth largest police department in the country, between the Baltimore and Dade County Police Departments. The budget for the Division of School Safety, which includes security officers, 123 civilians and a fleet of 90 vehicles, totaled nearly $73 million in 1993. Also that year, 95 percent of the schools had school safety officers and 41 high schools—or more than one-fourth of all high schools—had a weapons-detection program.

Program Overview

RCCP is a school-based program in conflict-resolution and intercultural understanding, jointly sponsored by the New York City Board of Education and Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR). ESR is a nonprofit organization dedicated to conflict-resolution and multicultural education. RCCP began in 1985 as a collaboration between ESR and the board to provide a model for an instructional program in school change and violence-prevention.

RCCP's objectives include modeling nonviolent alternatives for dealing with conflict and teaching negotiation, as well as other conflict-resolution skills. RCCP focuses on changing the school climate and requires a strong commitment at the highest levels within the school system. School districts then approach individual principals and teachers about joining

[14]The Chancellor, appointed by the Board of Education of the City of New York, has oversight over all the schools and direct responsibility for the high schools. The board selects superintendents to administer elementary and intermediate/junior high schools in 32 separate community school districts.

the program. Participation at every level is voluntary; school districts, principals, individual teachers, and parents take part because they choose to do so. RCCP is in place in 180 elementary, intermediate/junior high, and high schools in New York City, with 3,000 teachers and 70,000 students participating.[15] According to RCCP officials, most of the programs serve at-risk students located in lower-income neighborhoods in Brooklyn, South Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens.

The K-12 curriculum focuses on violence-prevention, conflict resolution, and countering bias. RCCP curricula include the following: active listening, assertiveness (as opposed to aggressiveness or passivity), expressing feelings, perspective-taking, cooperation, negotiation, and interrupting bias. Teaching strategies include role-playing, interviewing, group discussion, and brainstorming. These teaching strategies require teachers to adopt a new style of classroom management. This method involves a sharing of power with students so that they can learn to deal with their own disputes. To create this change, RCCP has an intensive staff development component. RCCP staff visit classrooms and conduct one-on-one consultations, demonstration lessons, and after-school meetings with teachers and administrators. In addition, RCCP's parent component teaches parents how to lead workshops for other parents on intergroup relations, family communication, and conflict resolution. RCCP has an administrator's component also.

Program Accomplishments and Evaluation Efforts

RCCP contracted with Metis Associates, Inc., a private consulting group, to do an external evaluation for the 1988-89 school year in three community school districts. The evaluation assessed the various program components and measured the program's impact on participating students, staff, and administrators. To determine RCCP's program impact, Metis Associates, Inc., primarily used questionnaires to 200 participating teachers,[16] as well as various school personnel and administrators, and administered achievement tests to a sample of 176 participating students and a control group of 219 nonparticipating students. To determine the effectiveness of the mediation program, Metis Associates, Inc., surveyed approximately 150 teachers, 11 school staff, and 143 student mediators in the five schools using the program.

[15]Currently, RCCP is being disseminated in over 300 schools nationwide under the auspices of the RCCP National Center.

[16]Of the 200 teachers participating, about 130 or 65 percent returned completed surveys. For about 75 percent of the respondents, 1988-89 was their first year with RCCP.

Seventy-one percent of teachers responded that the program led to less physical violence in the classroom and 67 percent observed less name-calling and fewer verbal put-downs. The test results of 4th, 5th, and 6th grade participants showed that they learned key concepts of conflict resolution and could apply them in hypothetical situations. Over 98 percent of respondents in the five schools said that the mediation component gave children an important tool for dealing with conflicts.

The Metis report concluded that RCCP was exemplary and that participants' assessments were extremely positive. The report cited teacher's surveys that revealed a positive change in children's attitudes and behaviors as a result of their participation in RCCP.

In 1993, CDC awarded RCCP a 3-year grant to conduct an extensive evaluation. This evaluation will look at the impact of the program, the readiness of teachers, and the importance of each program component.

Major Success Factors

RCCP officials believe the following key factors contribute to the program's success:

- an ongoing, long-term commitment with the school district,
- strong support of the principal and school administrators, and
- partnerships with parents and the community.

Implementation Barriers

RCCP officials stated that the major barrier they encountered was struggling to work within a culture that glamorizes violent responses to conflict. RCCP bases its program on the premise that human aggression is a learned behavior and that conflict itself is a normal part of life. According to RCCP officials, what must change, therefore, is how students respond to conflict. RCCP teaches students that violence is not an acceptable means of resolving conflict, that they can learn new nonviolent skills, and that they have a choice to make when a conflict arises.

Funding Sources

Sponsoring school districts and foundation grants fund RCCP operations. For the 1992-93 school year, the budget for the New York City RCCP program was about $2 million. The board funded staff salaries and teacher stipends in the amount of $700,000. ESR was responsible for $1.3 million, with $750,000 from contracts with the city's participating school districts and $550,000 raised from private sources. As mentioned earlier, CDC has

funded a 3-year evaluation of the RCCP program, totaling approximately $729,000 ($243,000 annually starting in 1993).

Paramount, California: Alternatives to Gang Membership Program, Paramount Unified School District

District Profile

The Paramount Unified School District encompasses 13 schools that had an enrollment of 13,879 in the 1993-94 school year. The student population was about 73 percent Hispanic, 14 percent African-American, 8 percent white, and 4 percent Asian/Pacific Islander for the 1993-94 school year, 46 percent of the students had limited English proficiency and about 60 percent received free or reduced-price lunches.

Most of the 30 expulsions in school year 1993-94 were for weapons possession or assault and battery. Although the district does not compile the reasons for suspension, school officials estimate that most of the 4,254 suspended days that year involved possession of drugs, fighting, or defiance of authority. Currently, the district contracts for one armed, uniformed sheriff's deputy at the single high school. As of March 1994, because of racial tensions that had erupted on campus, the school board was considering the purchase of hand-held metal detectors for the high school.

Program Overview

ATGM seeks to reduce gang membership by teaching students the harmful consequences of a gang lifestyle, how to not participate in it, and how to choose positive alternatives. The City Council, together with the school district and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, recognized that recreation programs and law enforcement alone were not enough to contain the growing gang problem in their community. The City of Paramount and the Paramount Unified School District developed a partnership in 1982 and started ATGM. The program bases its approach on the belief that interest in gangs begins at a young age and, therefore, the focus is on reaching children early.

The ATGM program includes three parts: an elementary school curriculum, an intermediate school follow-up program, and neighborhood meetings. The elementary program includes a 2nd grade curriculum, taught in 10 weekly 40-minute lessons and a 5th grade curriculum, taught in 15 weekly 55-minute lessons. The 7th grade follow-up program consists of eight biweekly lessons. These lessons expand on the topics introduced in the elementary school curriculum, such as peer pressure and drug abuse. The program uses many guest speakers and focuses on self-esteem, the consequences of a criminal lifestyle, and higher education and career opportunities. The ATGM program includes all students in the 2nd, 5th, and 7th grades.

Program officials consider the neighborhood meetings a major emphasis of the ATGM program. These efforts encourage parents to attend meetings—held at schools, churches, parks, community centers and private residences—to educate them about gangs. These meetings, which are bilingual (English/Spanish), also provide parents with information, encouragement, and help in preventing their children from joining gangs. ATGM staff members hold an average of 50 neighborhood meetings each year. An important part of these meetings is the individual outreach and follow-up meetings with students and their families. ATGM staff members frequently meet one-on-one with at-risk students who have been referred to them by teachers.

Program Accomplishments and Evaluation Efforts

City officials have conducted several evaluations of the ATGM program over the years, which mainly used pre- and post-test questionnaires of participants. These studies showed that the ATGM program made a difference in keeping children out of gangs. For example, while some 5th grade students may have had neither positive nor negative feelings toward gang membership before participating in the ATGM program, after their participation these same students tend to have a negative attitude toward gangs. According to ATGM staff members, ATGM made a difference in keeping students out of gangs. During a 4-year period, officials gave several questionnaires to the original 1982-83 group of 5th grade participants. For example, in June 1984, officials tested the original 5th grade group when they were in intermediate school. Of the 170 6th graders who previously had participated in the ATGM program, 90 percent responded positively when asked if the program helped them to stay out of gangs.

During the 1986-87 school year, ATGM officials tested a group of 9th graders who were ATGM participants in the 5th grade. Again, more than 90 percent of these students said that they were staying out of gangs. In addition, in February 1993, program officials conducted a different type of evaluation. Working with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, city officials matched 3,612 names of ATGM participants with a listing of identified gang members. This match identified 152 students, or 4 percent, as gang members, and 3,460 participants, or 96 percent, who were not.

Major Success Factors

According to program officials, the key factors contributing to the program's success include

- presenting information on the consequences of being in a gang in a factual, no-nonsense manner that allows students to come to their own conclusions about whether joining a gang is a good choice;
- reaching out to children and their families through home visitation and parent meetings in the community;
- exposing children to the program early in their lives—in the 2nd, 5th, and 7th grades;
- incorporating the program sessions as part of the regular school curriculum and conducting lessons in both Spanish and English;
- using bilingual staff who are familiar with the community and are sensitive to Latino culture; and
- exposing children to positive role models and alternatives to the gang lifestyle.

Implementation Barriers

When ATGM began about 13 years ago, the major barrier was the lack of research, training, and materials about antigang programs, especially for the Latino community. Over the years, ATGM staff have developed their own curriculum, through trial and error, and borrowed from other prevention programs. Program officials cite the lack of bilingual audiovisual materials for both children and parents as a continuing problem.

Program and school officials cited the District's high transiency rate of 33 percent[17] as a major problem. Children who recently moved to Paramount have not been exposed to the ATGM program. A 1992 survey of Paramount high school students revealed that over one-half (56 percent) did not attend elementary school in the district. Program officials speculated that many of these transient students are unable to develop strong ties to the school and are more likely to be involved in gangs. They believed that if area schools had similar antigang programs, the problem would lessen.

Funding Sources

Since its inception, Paramount has funded the ATGM program entirely with its general fund. For the 1992-93 school year, the program budget was $150,000, which funded three neighborhood counselors and supplies.

[17]Average rate of children in the district who begin the school year and leave before the school year ends.

Federally Sponsored Evaluations of School-Based Violence-Prevention Programs

Grant title	Evaluation objective	Fiscal year 1993	Fiscal year 1994
National Institute of Justice (U.S. Department of Justice)			
Longitudinal Impact Evaluation of the Strategic Intervention High-Risk Youth Program (Austin, Texas; Bridgeport, Connecticut; Savannah, Georgia; and Seattle, Washington)	To evaluate several programs that provide a range of social services to targeted youth 11-13 years old and their families in four cities. Services received by program participants include educational counseling, mentors, and summer programs. Parents receive advice on effective parenting, crisis intervention, and drug counseling. Target neighborhoods receive additional public services in the form of increased enforcement, safe school routes, and community policing teams.	0	$418,000
Evaluation of Violence- Prevention Programs in Middle Schools (New York, New York)	To evaluate two types of violence-prevention programs in New York City. One program couples a traditional conflict-resolution program with peer-mediation. The other program combines traditional methods with a victimization curriculum, a schoolwide antiviolence campaign, and a counseling component.	[a]	[a]
National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training	To evaluate a gang-prevention program in which uniformed officers provide a 9-week (1-hour per week) course about the negative aspects of gangs.	0	183,318
Improving School Safety by Empowering Students in Educational Process (Omaha, Nebraska)	To evaluate a program where students, teachers, and police work together to identify and solve problems on a high school campus. The evaluation design calls for a matched pair of high schools, one to receive the program and the other to serve as a control.	$120,841	0
Reducing School Violence in Detroit (Detroit, Michigan)	To evaluate a conflict-resolution and violence-reduction intervention program implemented in 10 middle schools.	214,970	0
Subtotal		**$335,811**	**$601,667**
National Institute of Mental Health (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)			
Epidemiologic Center for Early Risk Behaviors (Baltimore, Maryland)	To evaluate two interventions, one directed at shy and aggressive behaviors that predict later antisocial behavior and heavy substance use. The other is aimed at learning problems, a predictor of later psychiatric symptoms and, possibly, disorders. Both interventions target children in grades 1-2.	1,638,000	1,292,000
Multisite Prevention of Conduct Disorder (MPCD) (Durham, North Carolina)	[b]	1,594,000	1,754,000
MPCD (Nashville, Tennessee)	[b]	1,573,000	1,713,000
MDCD (Seattle, Washington)	[b]	1,612,000	1,612,000
MPCD (Rural Pennsylvania)	[b]	1,358,000	1,454,000
Prevention Research with Aggressive, Rejected Children (Durham, North Carolina)	To evaluate two intervention programs. One is designed to have impact on parents and teachers as well as on aggressive, rejected children. The second design involves examining a combination of intervention methods involving students 7-17 years old.	100,000	100,000
Oregon Prevention Research Center (Eugene, Oregon)	To evaluate several integrated components designed to prevent conduct disorder. The interventions focus on family behavior management, parental monitoring of children's activities, home-school liaison, and an after-school program to improve academic and social skills for children in grades 1 and 5.	1,348,000	1,440,000

(continued)

Grant title	Evaluation objective	Fiscal year 1993	Fiscal year 1994
School-Based Secondary Prevention for ADHD Children (St. Paul, Minnesota)	To evaluate a prevention program for young children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) 8-14 years old at 18 elementary schools.	378,000	327,000
Preventing Antisocial Behavior in High-Risk Children (Chicago and Aurora, Illinois)	To evaluate the effectiveness of three complementary, multiyear preventive interventions for high-risk urban youth. Level A is a classroom-based training program combined with teacher training. Level B uses the same curriculum as in level A plus small group training. Level C combines level B interventions with a family intervention.	864,000	898,000
Subtotal		**$10,465,000**	**$10,590,000**
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)			
Peace Builders (Tucson, Arizona)	To evaluate the effectiveness of a peace-builders curriculum at reducing physical and verbal aggression in elementary school students.	223,164	242,120
System of Values (Portland, Oregon)	To evaluate the effectiveness of a program that provides students in grades 7-9 with adult mentors and training in conflict resolution and social skills, peer education in violence-prevention, recreational opportunities, and academic tutoring.	211,250	220,675
Reducing Dating Violence (Johnston County, North Carolina)	To evaluate the effectiveness of a school-based program designed to reduce dating violence. Selected students receive classroom instruction about gender stereotypes and social norms that contribute to dating violence. Key individuals in the community will be trained to be resources for youth who seek assistance about teenage dating violence.	233,671	229,281
Students for Peace (Houston, Texas)	To evaluate the effectiveness of a project to reduce aggressive behaviors among students in grades 6-8. The primary program components are a school health promotion council, a curriculum that provides knowledge and skills, peer-mediation training, and parent involvement.	261,523	226,941
Conflict Resolution Computer Module (Indianapolis, Indiana)	To evaluate the effectiveness of a computer-based instructional program designed to teach social skills and conflict resolution. The computer module will be used to teach 6th to 8th grade students nonviolent interpersonal problem-solving strategies.	118,697	208,141
Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (New York, New York)	To evaluate a curriculum for students in grades K-12 covering conflict-resolution and intercultural understanding. The curriculum includes teacher training, classroom lessons on conflict resolution, and training in peer-mediation.	221,403	200,826
Preventing Antisocial Behavior in High-Risk Children (Chicago and Aurora, Illinois)	To evaluate three levels of preventive interventions for high-risk urban youth aged 7-13. Level A consists of classroom-based training to increase awareness and knowledge about the factors that influence peer and other social relationships. Level B consists of the same treatments as in Level A plus training conducted through small groups and peer relationships for high-risk children. Level C consists of the same treatments as in Level B plus a family intervention for the high-risk children and their families.	227,333	230,883

(continued)

Grant title	Evaluation objective	Fiscal year 1993	Fiscal year 1994
Working Toward Peace (Detroit, Michigan)	To evaluate the effectiveness of two school-based primary prevention programs. The first program, Skills for Adolescence, is a comprehensive skill-based curriculum that covers self-discipline, responsibility, problem-solving, setting goals, critical thinking, service to others, and prevention of drug abuse. The second program, Working Toward Peace, reinforces concepts taught in the Skills for Adolescence curriculum.	101,039	117,227
Attributional Bias and Reactive Aggression (Los Angeles, California)	To evaluate a program designed to decrease reactive physical and verbal aggression directed towards peers. This program uses role playing, discussion of personal experiences, and training to interpret and properly categorize the behavioral cues expressed by others in social situations.	174,599	195,639
Richmond Youth Violence-Prevention Program (Richmond, Virginia)	To evaluate a program designed to reduce aggressive behaviors among 6th grade students. The program teaches conflict-resolution skills and peer-mediation and modifies the school environment by altering school policies to support nonviolence.	210,711	224,200
Peer Group Training and Community Empowerment (Houston, Texas)	To evaluate a program to reduce mortality and morbidity due to violence among African-American and Hispanic youth in three middle schools. The interventions include training peer leaders in group support, social skills, leadership and violence-prevention; parenting skills training for parents of the youths in peer leader groups; and training for 20 neighborhood violence-prevention advocates.	375,000	509,386
Education, Counseling, and Community Awareness (New York, New York)	To evaluate a multifaceted intervention approach that targets students, families, and communities through a conflict-resolution program, a counseling and education program, a schoolwide antiviolence campaign, and a big sibling program to mentor younger children.	339,830	346,653
Subtotal		**$2,698,220**	**$2,951,972**
Total		**$13,499,031**	**$14,143,639**

[a]Funding for this project is based on a fiscal year 1992 grant of $215,378.

[b]To evaluate a multisite prevention program to implement a developmentally based, long-term, comprehensive intervention to prevent conduct disorder and social maladaptation in adolescence and adulthood. It is hypothesized that the intervention will lead to early improvements in child behavior and family and social settings and that these improvements, in turn, will lead to long-term prevention of conduct disorder and related problems.

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Scope and Methodology

To accomplish our objectives and further our understanding of key issues, we interviewed acknowledged experts and federal agency officials involved in violence-prevention programming and research. We also collaboratively sponsored a school safety symposium with Harvard University's School of Public Health, which brought together federal officials, program directors, and violence-prevention researchers to discuss efforts to curb school violence.

Based on this information, we compiled a listing of more than 250 violence-prevention programs. From this listing, and after considering the recommendations of violence-prevention experts, we judgmentally selected four programs for site visits—two in California and one each in Ohio and New York.

- Anaheim, California: SMART;
- Dayton, Ohio: PACT;
- New York, New York: RCCP; and
- Paramount, California: ATGM.

We selected these programs because they operated primarily in schools, were located in different regions of the country, were located in areas with nationally recognized violence problems, and had completed evaluations showing initial signs of success in curbing school violence.

We then visited seven schools associated with these four programs. At each school, we gathered program information, including key characteristics, success factors, implementation barriers, evaluation outcomes, and funding sources. In addition, we observed students participating in the programs and interviewed program officials.

To obtain student and teacher views on efforts to curb school violence, we conducted 16 discussion groups—7 with teachers and 9 with students—at the seven schools. The size of these groups varied. Generally, the teacher groups consisted of 4 to 9 participants, while the student groups ranged from 8 to 15 participants. In total, 103 students and 35 teachers participated. Our discussion group results are descriptive, showing the range of opinions expressed by participants.

To identify the key characteristics associated with promising violence-prevention programs we conducted a literature review. In addition, we held discussions with school safety and violence-prevention

experts and determined the key factors for success at the programs we visited.

Finally, to identify federally sponsored evaluations of violence-prevention programs, we interviewed federal officials at the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice and reviewed the 1994 Juvenile Delinquency Development Statements: A Report on Federal Programs.[18]

We conducted our review between January 1994 and March 1995 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

[18]This report lists federal programs that support the goals of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974. These programs generally concern juvenile delinquency, prevention, treatment, diversion, education, training, and research, including alcohol and drug programs and programs to improve the juvenile justice system.

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